

# MARINE BOASTS OF EXPLOITS IN HAYTIAN DAYS

'Bumped Off 39 With Machine Gun' and Only  
Lost Top Sergeantcy.

AVENGED HIS 'BUDDY'

Boastings of Men in Service  
Reveal a Non-Observance  
of Ethics of War.

PROVOCATION SUFFERED

Only Perfunctory Investigation  
Follows Unauthorized  
'Execution' of Thirty.

By DAVID J. DAVIES.

The clouds of secrecy that have been obscuring the searchlight of publicity as regards the conduct of United States troops in Hayti and San Domingo appear to be dissolving. The letter written by Major-General George Barnett a year ago, calling for a full and complete investigation has focused public attention upon matters and conditions in the Black Republic; and once the probe is properly inserted and kept at work revelations of a startling nature are inevitable.

The writer in a lengthy article prepared for THE NEW YORK HERALD, and which appeared under date of Sept. 14, 1919, said:

"Some day the history of the United States' occupation of Hayti and San Domingo will be written. The names of the American boys who have fallen victims to the bullets or knives or machetes of the natives will be made known. The almost unbelievable hardships suffered by our men will be described; and then we will ask ourselves: 'What was it all about, anyhow?'"

In that article certain charges were made. Attention was directed to allegations that the marines were not observing the niceties or ethics of civilized warfare and that the people of the States would be shocked were they to learn real and actual conditions affecting the stay of the marines in Hayti.

That article, as stated, appeared under date of September 14, 1919. Very shortly thereafter Major-General Barnett, then in command of the United States Marines in Hayti, wrote to Col. John H. Russell, commander of the Marine Corps in Hayti, was written. That fact, the close connection of dates, may be significant and again it may not, but in any event we reserve the right to believe it was.

Stories of Eyewitnesses.

Marines who have served in Hayti and in San Domingo are not loath to tell what they learned while there. The writer, although not a native of Hayti, was furnished with the stories of eye witnesses and the boastings of others who had been through certain happenings there. A soldier who was in Hayti, and who, in the words of the writer, "was a good fellow, a good fellow, a good fellow," in San Domingo, I encountered a marine, a former resident of Honesdale, Pa. He was serving his third "hitch," and he had been through the trouble in Hayti. And the stories he told caused one to wonder why such things could be. Always talkative and given to boasting, the one time steel worker appeared to take delight in describing scenes and incidents that had come under his notice.

"Why," I can remember that man saying, "we were ordered up through a valley near Port au Prince, with orders to kill and burn everything that came across. We did. We killed every man we came across, and sometimes we killed others than men. We burned houses and we burned other buildings. We were ordered to put the fear of God into the hearts of those negroes, and we surely did."

His great delight appeared to be in describing how certain of the "niggers," as he insisted upon terming the Haytians, were "bumped off" just for "the fun of the thing." The marines looked it over the natives in real swashbuckler fashion, no matter of what sex, who they killed, will of the wearer of the khaki uniform.

In the article referred to above by the writer, he was quoted as follows in his description of one "trick he turned": "I had a lot of fun, of whom I thought the world. We went through the rough stuff in Hayti—we went through hell. We worked together all the time after the orders came to 'clean up.' We slept together and we came to think the world of each other."

"During the raid we made a lot of our fellows were bumped off. Then and there my buddy and I made an agreement that if either of us was 'sent west' the survivor was to 'bump off' the other. And complete revenge had been taken. And what made me so crazy after my friend had been picked off by a skulking assassin at Port au Prince was the fact that we had gone through so much and had come through it. But an 'amigo' hiding behind the walls of an adobe shack got Tommie, and then—well, I didn't know what became of me!"

"I Got 39 of Them."

"That night I picked up a few tumbler of rum and after thinking the matter over I decided I was going to start a little war of my own. You know how they do down in these countries; how they plaster on the steam powder until it is almost as thick as the mud. They start on their nightly parades around the town square or plaza. Sometimes there is a band concert and sometimes there isn't. But, concert or no, the natives keep milling and milling and milling."

"The moon wasn't shining that night," continued this Jack the Avenger, "so I was in luck. I had determined to 'go it' as many as possible before the sun got me. I fully expected to go along with them, but I didn't care."

"At first I considered the idea of picking them off with a rifle. This would be too slow. So I grabbed a machine gun and swung into action."

"I got eight-nine of them before a marine officer bumped me on the head and laid me out. There was excitement to peddle and for the time it looked as though there was going to be hell in general. You know we really were at war with those Haytians; they were killing us and we were killing them. I guess I was a bit nuts, but—well, it was all in the game."

"I was court-martialed, of course. But the action against me wasn't very spirited. Our fellows knew that the Haytians were taking advantage of every opportunity that presented itself to bump off marines, and that's why, I guess, the only punishment I received

was a reduction from a top-sergeantcy to be a buck private."

He boasted of another exploit. This one was enacted in Santiago, near Port au Prince, where a marine was stationed. He was guarding five Dominicans who were making a road. The five broke for freedom. None got away. To quote him again:

"I was going to try and get a thirty yards I had dropped every one of them, and not one required more than one shot."

He is quoted here merely to show the conditions that obtained at the time of the writer's presence in the country—late in 1918. At that time armed marines were searching everywhere for evidence that the Dominicans were possessed of arms. There were no criminal courts; everything was attended to by the judge advocate in the northern section of the island.

He wasn't especially enamored of his job, either. A decent, fair minded man, with a good soldier, he did not believe in the search for evidence of his predecessors had done—sending a native to prison for from twenty to forty years merely because a rifle or revolver had been found in that native's hands. He possessed a temper to temper justice with mercy; and the same was true of the commandant of the northern provinces of San Domingo.

Only Perfunctory Inquiry.

But these conditions did not obtain in all parts of the island. I have in mind what happened down at Santo Domingo, the capital of the republic. Some twenty-five or thirty bandits (?) had been rounded up and jailed. The night of the capture the captain of the Guardia Nacional, Santo Domingo, was murdered. This captain was a marine sergeant who had been placed at the head of the Guardia—a body somewhat similar to our own state police. He was a very popular with his dusky subordinates.

That same night the twenty-five or thirty prisoners were taken out to a point two miles from the jail and executed. Nobody appeared to know who executed them or who gave orders for the crime. A perfunctory investigation was proceeded with, but nothing ever came of the matter.

The day before Thanksgiving, 1918, a Second Lieutenant and a detail of marines went out into the country to search for the capital of the bandits. Possessing firearms, I talked with the Lieutenant shortly before he left the fort. I talked with him when he returned.

"How did you do?" I inquired. "Did you get him?"

"I did get him,"—this with a smile. "I should say we did. Got him and four others."

"Where were they?" was the next query. "Bumped; left them there to be buried." "And so it went. The statement in Col. Russell's letter that only twelve marines have been executed is at variance with the stories of the marines who served there with Walter and Butler and who appeared to know where they spoke. I can recall the night when the bandits occupied the route for Puerto Plata—on our way from the States. A sergeant coming aboard with other officers reported that on the night before a party of bandits had killed and taken away in twenty-four to forty-eight hours when injected into the muscles."

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Dr. Wrenshall and his associates do not yet announce the treatment as a cure. Bound by the ethics of their profession, they only say that the leprosy treatment clinics in Honolulu are not being sent to the plague colony in Molokai, but are kept in the Honolulu Hospital, three miles out of the city, in a clean, sanitary building, surrounded by recreation grounds, and subjected to the treatment of the disease. The symptoms or bacillus indications do not return will the scientists claim a cure, but only say that the disease is cured. In the meantime leprosy patients are being sent to the plague colony in Molokai, but are kept in the Honolulu Hospital, three miles out of the city, in a clean, sanitary building, surrounded by recreation grounds, and subjected to the treatment of the disease.

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